

Attention

- Food Service Operators
- Retailers
- Manufacturers
- Brokers
- Wholesalers
- Exporters

For information about:

Poultry grading and
certification services

Contact:

USDA, AMS, Poultry Programs
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United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
Poultry Programs
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Quality Poultry for Volume Buyers



Services for Volume Poultry Buyers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service, offers voluntary grading and contract acceptance services for volume poultry buyers. These services are provided on a fee basis to those who request them. They are performed by professional, well-trained USDA graders.

Poultry graded according to established official U.S. quality standards are identified by the grademark shown at the left below:



USDA's contract acceptance service provides volume poultry buyers the assurance that the products they purchase meet their requirements. Poultry certified as complying with approved contract specifications is identified by the symbol shown above at the right. Contract specifications may include:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ▶ Product Formulation | ▶ Portion Control |
| ▶ Processing and Fabrication | ▶ Net Weight |
| ▶ Transportation | ▶ Laboratory Analysis |
| ▶ Temperature | ▶ Packaging |
| | ▶ Storage |

USDA Poultry Grading and Certification Services Provide Many Benefits

- ✔ Independent, third-party certification of poultry quality based on U.S. standards.
- ✔ Assurance of product quality on a continuous basis regardless of supplier.
- ✔ A common language that enables buyers and sellers to communicate about poultry quality and other characteristics without actually seeing the product.
- ✔ A basis for fair, competitive bidding between suppliers.
- ✔ Certification that purchases meet contract specifications for quality, grade, weight, quantity, temperature, packaging, packing, transportation, or other desired product characteristics.

Quality Factors for Poultry Carcasses, Parts, and Products

Quality refers to the usability, desirability, and value of a product that determine its marketability. Experience and research have identified certain properties in poultry that are desired by producers, processors, and consumers.

Standards of quality describe the factors that affect these properties in terms of meat yield, fat covering, and freedom from defects such as cuts and tears in the skin, broken bones, and discolorations on the meat and skin.

Grades apply to poultry of the same kind and class, and are determined based on the intensity, aggregate area, location, and number of defects encountered for each quality factor. The final quality rating (A, B, or C) is based on the factor with the lowest rating.

Quality Assurance and Contract Certification

Services provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)



USDA graders can certify the style and type of packaging and packing containers.



USDA graders check poultry for quality.



USDA graders can certify the weight range or net weight of whole carcasses, parts, or poultry products.



Grade A is the highest grade available.

Grade A whole carcasses and parts:

- ▶ are fully fleshed and meaty.
- ▶ have normal conformation and shape.
- ▶ are free of disjointed or broken bones.
- ▶ are free of feathers.
- ▶ are free of exposed flesh and discolorations.



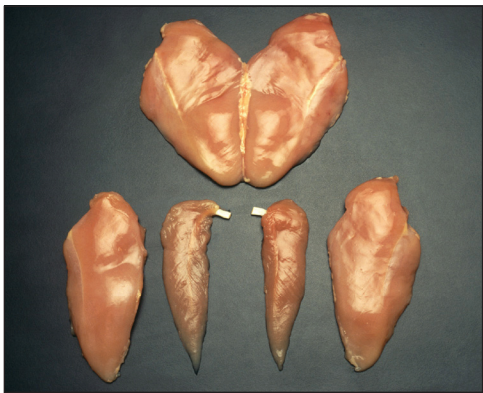
Whole carcass



8-piece cut-up



Breast and leg quarters



Boneless-skinless whole breast, breast halves, and tenderloins



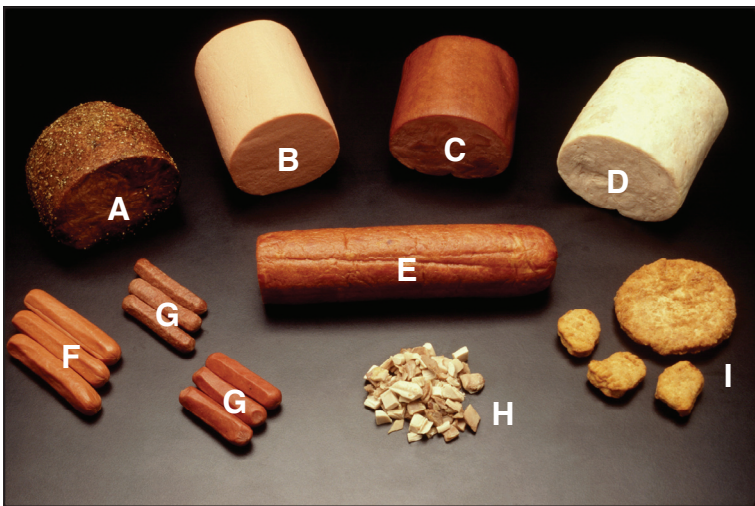
Boneless-skinless thigh and drumstick

Grade A boneless-skinless poultry products:

- ▶ are free of bone, cartilage, tendons, bruises, blood clots, and other discolorations.
- ▶ are free of cuts, tears, holes, or excess trimming around the outer edges of the product.

Further-processed products may be certified for:

- ▶ Formulation
- ▶ Temperature
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Net Weight
- ▶ Storage
- ▶ Processing and Fabrication
- ▶ Packing and Packaging
- ▶ Portion Control
- ▶ Laboratory Analysis



The further-processed poultry products pictured are:

- Turkey:
- A** - pastrami
 - B** - bologna
 - C** - ham
 - D** - breast roll
 - E** - Canadian bacon
 - F** - frankfurters
 - G** - sausage links
- Chicken:
- H** - cooked diced
 - I** - batter/breaded cooked